

People With Arthritis Get Active Thanks to Church's Program

Issue

Arthritis is the leading cause of disability among U.S. adults, limiting everyday activities for more than 7 million Americans and costing more than \$51 billion for medical care annually. Approximately 30 percent of S.C. adults have some form of arthritis. The 65 and older age group has the highest rate of the disease at 56.9 percent, and in South Carolina people in rural counties have a higher prevalence of arthritis than those who live in urban counties (34.8 percent versus 27.7 percent).

Intervention

Rev. A.C. Robinson, pastor at Pleasant Grove Missionary Baptist Church in rural Marion, addressed the problem through work with the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and other groups to offer the People with Arthritis Can Exercise (PACE) program to his congregation and community members. Thanks to a partnership between DHEC and the Lt. Governor's Office on Aging, senior citizens in rural communities such as Marion County have the opportunity to take part in classes that increase their physical activity and mobility and improve overall health.

Without Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant funding, this project would not have been possible. PHHS Block Grant funds allowed a staff person to provide technical assistance to Pleasant Grove Missionary Baptist Church. Without this local level support, the program would not have been nearly as successful.

During the past year:

- Pleasant Grove Missionary Baptist Church has offered a series of free 45-minute classes twice a week for eight weeks. Currently Pleasant Grove Missionary Baptist Church is in its seventh session of classes;
- More than 1,500 PACE brochures and 50 flyers were distributed in the community;
- Two promotional radio interviews at WJAY-AM Gospel Radio Station were conducted; and
- Six newspaper articles promoting the project were printed.

Impact

Pleasant Grove Missionary Baptist Church has managed to financially sustain the program *on its own*, months after the grant officially ended in December 2005.

- The church has been able to provide exercise classes that promote wellness for the senior population with arthritis, not only in their own church, but also throughout the community;
- In October 2006, the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program conducted a train-the-trainer session at Pleasant Grove Missionary Baptist Church; and
- To continue the program, the church is currently applying for funding through the William Randolph Hearst Foundation Health Grant.

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